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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000203

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR KPAO TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: BERDIMUHAMEDOV'S NEW SPEECH WRITER  
A TALENTED REALIST

Classified By: CDA RICHARD E. HOAGLAND: 1.4 (B), (D)

¶1. (C) During a February 6 meeting, Ministry of Culture International Relations Department Head Gulmurad Myradov (strictly protect) revealed to EmbOff he has been writing some of President's Berdimuhamedov recent speeches, including the "Cultural Revival" and "New Ideology" policy addresses. In closed-door meetings with us, Myradov has been highly critical of the bureaucracy and former President Niyazov, and his criticism are reflected in the President's speeches. Myradov is a former broadcast and print journalist who has made a 25-year career in the Ministry on merit. He has written for "Neutral Turkmenistan" and "Turkmenistan" and produced and directed TV programs for Turkmen Channel 4. He was worked in Turkemistan and Russia during the Soviet era. He continues to review and edit much of the content aired on Turkmen Channel 4 and articles in the country's two main newspapers.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT BERDIMUHAMEDOV

¶2. (C) Myradov's influence was made clear during a specially called January 19 Cabinet Meeting to discuss the direction of media and cultural development, when the president read the "New Ideology" address written by Myradov. In an unusual step, Berdimuhamedov summoned not just all the ministers, but also their deputy ministers, university rectors, and the directors of all eight TV and radio channels and print media to hear the message, or rather rebuke. "It is time to move away from the old ideology," he told his assembled guests, "whose sole purpose was to publicize and celebrate the person of the president." Berdimuhamedov said that the country has entered a "new stage of development", and media and cultural institutions need to search for ways to change the "old ideology." He criticized mass media for working in isolation of everyday realities and leaving significant public problems undisclosed. "The State is for the people," the President exclaimed.

MYRADOV'S WORLD VIEW

¶3. (C) During several visits to discuss routine Embassy business such as producing an English-language-instruction TV show, the very focused and business-like Myradov opened by venting his displeasure at the bureaucracy and former President Niyazov. He recounted for EmbOff how he advised incoming Presidential Press Secretary and former Culture Minister Kakageldi Chariyardurdiyev "not to fall into the same trap" of creating a "personality cult" for the new president. Referring to former President Niyazov, Myradov has commented that "Bolnoi" (Russian for "sick one" or "crazy") has ruined the bureaucracy, creating a "dictatorship" system where officials are too "fearful" to take responsibility for their actions because of potential punishment.

¶4. (C) Myradov has turned to EmbOffs for help with training his personnel. He frequently has asked about training programs in the U.S. for his technical staff. He explained that he has sent some staff to Europe (France and Germany), but feels that the U.S. may have better programs. He said that he will never send anyone to Russia. (NOTE: Post has responded to Myradov's appeal for technical assistance. END NOTE.) Myradov describes his personal health as poor, because of overwork. He frequently has headaches, works long hours during the evenings and throughout the weekend. As he puts it, he has to work this way, because "no one else can do the work." Myradov knows the difference between high-quality journalism and low-quality propaganda, and, in his opinion, he is surrounded by mediocrity.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Gulmurad Myradov is more than just the head of International Relations at the Ministry of Culture. He has

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written the last several speeches delivered by the president (as well as one he will deliver at the February 8 Cabinet of Ministers meeting). He definitely has a close relationship with the president. When EmbOff presented Myradov with a brochure for a U.S.-based broadcasting school, he immediately faxed it directly to the presidential palace. Myradov wants to modernize TV broadcasting and at the same time reform the bureaucracy. It is hard to tell whether he was chosen because his views coincide with the president's, or whether his views have influenced the president, or if a bit of both are true. Nevertheless, the President is very lucky to have such a talented realist at his side. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND